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CLARION REVIEW ★★☆☆☆ JUVENILE FICTION

Beekemose

Desmond Nicholas Bamford
AuthorHouse (May 24, 2012)
Unknown $9.99 (42pp)
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This collection of short tales introduces the Beekemose, fantastical creatures who live in the harsh climate of the Arctic and approach life with an innocent and humorous world view. The Beekemose behave like humans, living with their family groups in igloos and passing the time with activities of daily living, but they are a different species entirely. In illustrations and text, Desmond Nicholas Bamford fleshes out the world of these blue, kidney-shaped beings and their animal companions.

Seven short stories feature the Beekemose interacting with their families, the harsh Arctic environment, and their animal friends, Gully and Sealy. Being so isolated, the Beekemose, particularly Baby Beekemose, have little knowledge of manufacturing and technology. The animals who have ventured further into the world are somewhat aware of modern civilization and are able to share this information with the Beekemose.

The most appealing stories in the collection share a similar structure. Baby Beekemose encounters something from mainstream society—a flag, a piano, a car—and his innocent wonderings about the object provide an insight into or a commentary on modern culture. He wonders about bombs, “Why create such a thing?” and about flags, “Why would you use a piece of cloth to identify yourself to an area?” Some of the stories are illustrated with charming black-and-white reproductions of paintings.

Other tales are less satisfying, and their presence, as well as multiple misspelled words like “enthral,” “draged,” “squeel,” “suset,” and “beautifull,” indicate that the book did not receive professional editing. Even the spelling of “Beekemose” varies: on one page written as “Mummy Bekemose” and on another as “Daddy Beakemose.”

If the intended goal of the stories is to, in the words of a Beekemose, “contemplate the strangeness of humans and what they build,” the author has achieved a partial success, particularly with the first few chapters of the book. “The Car” contains some beautiful imagery, like Mummy mistaking the headlights for “stars for eyes.” Another round of editing to standardize the grammar and spelling and even out the quality of the stories presented would help this collection become a more appealing fantasy offering for children.

CAROLYN BAILEY (November 7, 2012)

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